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(71) Applicant: THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
[US/US]; 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1063
(US).

(72) Inventor: SANDHAGE, Kenneth, H.; 2001 Hillside
Drive, Upper Arlington, OH 43221 (US).

(74) Agent: GILCREST, Roger, A.; Standley & Gilcrest LLP,
Suite 210, 495 Metro Place South, Dublin, OH 43017 (US).

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(54) Title: SHAPED MICROCOMPONENTS VIA REACTIVE CONVERSION OF SYNTHETIC MICROTEMPLATES

(57) **Abstract:** The purpose of the present invention is to describe a novel approach for converting 3-dimensional, synthetic micro- and nano-templates into different materials with a retention of shape/dimensions and morphological features. The ultimate objective of this approach is to mass-produce micro-and nano-templates of tailored shapes through the use of synthetic or man-made micropreforms, and then chemical conversion of such templates by controlled chemical reactions into near net-shaped, micro- and nano-components of desired compositions. The basic idea of this invention is to obtain a synthetic microtemplate with a desired shape and with desired surface features, and then to convert the microtemplate into a different material through the use, of chemical reactions.

SHAPED MICROCOMPONENTS VIA REACTIVE CONVERSION OF SYNTHETIC MICROTEMPLATES

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/314,533, filed on August 23, 2001, which is incorporated herein by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is in the field of shaped microcomponents or micropreforms fabricated via the reactive conversion of synthetic microtemplates. These synthetic microtemplates or micropreforms may then be converted into other oxides by a chemical reaction(s).

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The worldwide research and development effort on microdevices (e.g., electromechanical, hydromechanical, thermomechanical, electrochemical, thermoelectrical, etc.) has increased dramatically over the past decade. Such devices have found significant use as sensors in automotive and medical applications, with estimates of the global MEMS (microelectromechanical systems) market ranging from \$12-14 billion in 2000. However, a far larger untapped potential exists for the use of new micromechanical devices in a variety of advanced applications, such as in: i) medicine (e.g., targeted drug or radiation delivery, rapid clinical and genomic analyses, *in vitro* sensors, microtools for surgery, micropumps and microvalves, microreactors, etc.), ii) transportation and energy production (e.g., new sensors and actuators for pollution control, enhanced energy utilization, and improved engine performance; microcomponents for automotive, diesel, jet, or rocket engines; microcomponents for turbines used in energy conversion or generation; microreactors, micropumps, microbearings, etc.), iii) communications and computing

(e.g., micro-optical devices, microactuators, microswitches, microtransducers, etc.), and iv) the production/manufacturing of food, chemicals, and materials (e.g., microrobotics, rapid on-line microsensors, microreactors, micropumps, microdies, etc.).

Despite the recognized technological and economic significance of new microdevices, the fabrication methods used to date have been largely limited to techniques developed within the microelectronics industry. The micromachining of silicon may be done by one or a combination of methods, including but not limited to: photolithography (e.g. UV, x-ray, e-beam, ion-beam), dry physical etching (e.g. ion etching/sputtering, laser ablation), dry chemical etching (e.g. with a reactive gas), combined dry physical and chemical etching (e.g. reaction ion etching), wet chemical etching and LIGA. Furthermore, the properties of silicon (room temperature brittleness, poor creep resistance at $\square 600^{\circ}\text{C}$, high thermal conductivity, modest melting point, biochemical incompatibility, etc.) make silicon-based microdevices unattractive for a number of potential applications. New fabrication methods capable of yielding self-assembled, non-silicon microdevices in a massively parallel fashion are needed to allow for a much wider range of commercial applications.

The purpose of the present invention is to provide a novel approach for converting 2- or 3-dimensional, synthetic (non-naturally-occurring) micro- and nano-templates into new materials with a retention of shape/dimensions and morphological features. The ultimate objective of this approach is to mass-produce micro- and nano-templates of tailored shapes through the use of synthetic or man-made micropreforms, and then chemical conversion of such templates by controlled chemical reactions into near net-shaped, micro- and nano-components of desired

compositions.

Summary of the Invention

The basic idea of this invention is to obtain a synthetic (non-naturally-occurring) microtemplate with a desired shape and/or with desired surface features, such as through micromachining of a material, and to convert the microtemplate into a different material with shape maintenance through the use of chemical reactions. For example, silicon may be micromachined to obtain a silicon micropreform. The silicon micropreform may then be oxidized (for example by heating in dry or wet oxygen or air) to obtain a silica microtemplate, or the silicon micropreform is used as a template or mold onto which silica or a silica precursor is deposited by any of the known deposition methods. The silica microtemplates may then be converted into another oxide or oxide/metal composite through chemical reaction(s).

Another method of obtaining a microcomponent of the present invention is to micromachine silicon and then use the resulting silicon micropreform to obtain a shaped silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound (e.g., SiC, Si₃N₄, MoSi₂). The fabrication of a silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound micropreform from a shaped silicon micropreform may be conducted by gas phase reaction of the shaped silicon micropreform (e.g., nitridation of the patterned silicon micropreform, carburization of the patterned silicon micropreform, reaction of patterned silicon with a Mo-bearing gas to form MoSi₂), or by using the shaped or patterned silicon micropreform as a template or mold onto which a silicon-bearing compound or a silicon-bearing precursor compound may be deposited. Then the silicon-bearing precursor compound micropreforms may be converted into other oxides or oxide/metal composites through chemical reaction(s). The silicon-bearing ceramic

precursor compounds may themselves be useful compounds or they may be converted to ceramics or intermetallic compounds.

The present invention is to a method for the production of shaped microcomponents comprising the steps of: obtaining at least one synthetic microtemplate having an original chemical composition and an original dimensional feature; and subjecting the at least one synthetic microtemplate to a chemical reaction, so as to partially or completely convert the microtemplate into a microcomponent having a chemical composition different than the original chemical composition and having substantially the same dimensional feature(s) as the original synthetic microtemplate.

The reacted or changed microtemplate may possess a composition, a shape, and surface features appropriate for a particular microcomponent or microdevice (e.g., microsprings, microball bearings, microsyringes, etc.). Other medical microdevices in which the present invention may be used are fully discussed in U.S. Patent Nos. 6,107,102 to Ferrari, 6,044,981 to Chu et al., 5,985,328 to Chu et al., 5,985,164 to Chu et al., 5,948,255 to Keller et al., 5,893,974 to Keller et al., 5,798,042 to Chu et al., 5,770,076 to Chu et al., and 5,651,900 to Keller et al. The above-listed patents are hereby incorporated by reference. Hence, by this novel combined use of micromachining and reaction engineering, a large number of microcomponents of desired shape and of desired composition may be produced.

"Micromachining" of silicon may be done by one or a combination of methods, including but not limited to: photolithography (e.g. UV, x-ray, e-beam, ion-beam), dry physical etching (e.g. ion etching/sputtering, laser ablation), dry chemical etching

(e.g. with a reactive gas), combined dry physical and chemical etching (e.g. reaction ion etching), wet chemical etching and LIGA.

"Deposition" is meant to include physical or chemical vapor deposition, spin coating of a silica slurry or silica precursor solution, screen printing of silica slurry or silica precursor solution, pressing of hot viscous glass onto the silicon micropreform, and casting of molten glass onto the silicon micropreform.

A "dimensional feature" is meant to include a shape or a surface feature. Surface features include, but are not limited to, pores, spacings between pores, depressions, ridges, and protuberances.

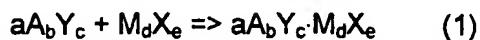
The terms "microtemplate", "micropreform" or "microarticle" are hereby used interchangeably and are deemed to have the same meaning. Zeolites are compounds that may be included in the definition of microporous or nanoporous preforms.

The term "patterned silicon" or "patterned silicon micropreform" means a silicon that has been formed into a specific shape or a micropreform that has been previously shaped.

A "microcomponent" is defined as an object that may have at least one size dimension that is less than 1 millimeter and is preferably less than 100 microns and most preferably less than 25 microns and/or at least one surface feature with a dimension that is less than 1 millimeter and is preferably less than 100 microns and most preferably less than 25 microns.

The chemical reaction used to partially or completely convert the synthetic microtemplate may be an additive reaction in which a reactant is chemically

incorporated as a compound, solid solution, or mixture with the original constituents of the microtemplate. Such additive reactions are of the general type:

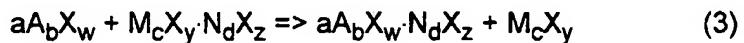


where A_bY_c is a reactant, M_dX_e is a constituent of the microtemplate, and $aA_bY_c \cdot M_dX_e$ is the ionically or covalently bonded new solid compound, solid solution, or solid mixture obtained from this reaction that is retained in the microcomponent; and wherein a, b, c, d, and e are any stoichiometric coefficients. M is defined as any metal cation, X is defined as a metalloid ion. The reactant, A_bY_c , involved in this additive reaction may be present as a gas, a liquid or as a solid or within a gas phase, within a liquid phase or within a solid phase during the reaction. The reactant, A_bY_c , may also be deposited onto the microtemplate as a solid or liquid phase and then allowed to react, while in the solid or liquid state, with the microtemplate. An example of an additive reaction is:



where $P_xO_y(g)$ is a gaseous phosphorus oxide reactant species, $CaCO_3(s)$ is a solid constituent of a microtemplate, and $3CaO \cdot nP_xO_y(s)$ is the solid product of this additive reaction that is retained in the microcomponent.

The chemical reaction used to partially or completely convert the synthetic microtemplate may be a metathetic (exchange) reaction of the following type:



in which "a" moles of reactant A_bX_w react with one mole of $M_cX_y \cdot N_dX_z$ present within the microtemplate. In this metathetic reaction, the "a" moles of reactant A_bX_w

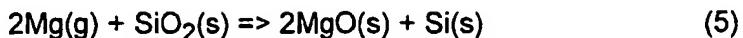
exchange with one mole of M_cX_y in the compound $M_cX_yN_dX_z$ to form the ionically or covalently bonded products $aA_bX_wN_dX_z$ and M_cX_y . The product $aA_bX_wN_dX_z$ may be a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture. The reactant, A_bX_w , involved in this metathetic reaction may be present as or within a gas phase or a liquid phase during the reaction. The reactant, A_bX_w , may also be deposited onto the microtemplate as a solid or liquid phase and then allowed to react, while in the solid or liquid state, with the microtemplate. A, M and N are all defined as any metal cation. X is a metalloid ion. a, b, c, d, w, y and z are any stoichiometric coefficients.

The chemical reaction used to partially or completely convert the synthetic microtemplate may be an oxidation-reduction (redox) reaction of the following type:



in which "y" moles of elemental reactant A react with "a" moles of the oxide M_xO_y present within the microtemplate. In this redox reaction, "y" moles of the reactant A become oxidized to form "y" moles of the product oxide, AO_a , and M within the oxide, M_xO_y , is reduced to form "ax" moles of M. A is defined as any elemental reactant but is preferably an element having a metallic characteristic. M is any metal. a, x and y are any stoichiometric coefficients. The elemental reactant, A, involved in this oxidation-reduction reaction may be present as or within a gas phase or a liquid phase during the reaction. The elemental reactant, A, may also be deposited onto the microtemplate as a solid or liquid phase and then allowed to react, while in the solid or liquid state, with the microtemplate. A redox reaction may be used to exchange the silicon in silicon oxide (silica) with a displacing reactant

species, so as to convert the silicon oxide into a different metal oxide compound. An example of such a redox reaction is:



where Mg(g) is a gaseous displacing reactant species, SiO₂(s) (silica) is a solid oxide constituent of a microtemplate, and MgO(s) is the solid oxide product of this redox reaction that is retained in the microcomponent. In this example, Mg(g) is the displacing reactant species that is oxidized to form MgO and SiO₂(s) is reduced to form Si(s). In this example, the displacing reactant species may be any reactant species adapted to reduce the silicon oxide into silicon. For instance, the said displacing reactant species may be selected from the group consisting of alkaline earth elements, such as beryllium, magnesium, calcium, strontium, barium, and mixtures thereof. The said displacing reactant species may also be selected from the group consisting of alkali elements, such as hydrogen, lithium, and mixtures thereof. The said displacing reactant species may also be selected from the group consisting of aluminum, titanium, zirconium, hafnium, yttrium, lanthanum, cerium, praesodymium, neodymium, samarium, europium, gadolinium, terbium, dysprosium, holmium, erbium, thulium, ytterbium, lutetium, thorium, uranium, and mixtures thereof.

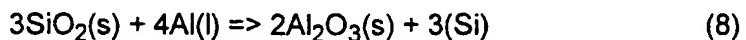
The microcomponent may define a space wherein the space is provided with at least one additional non-native substance. The at least one additional non-native substance may be a pharmaceutically active substance. The non-native substance may have an avenue of escape from the defined microcomponent space, whether by exiting through micropores or by osmosis.

The present invention is also to a method for the production of a shaped microcomponent comprising the steps of: obtaining at least one synthetic microtemplate having an original chemical composition, and an original dimensional feature; and subjecting the at least one synthetic microtemplate to a first chemical reaction, so as to partially or completely convert the at least one synthetic microtemplate into an intermediate microcomponent having a second chemical composition different than the original chemical composition; and then subjecting the intermediate microcomponent to a second chemical reaction so as to partially or completely convert the intermediate microcomponent into the shaped microcomponent having a chemical composition different than the original chemical composition and different than the second chemical composition and having substantially the same dimensional feature as the original dimensional feature.

Among the reactions that may be used to convert silica-based microtemplates into other oxides or oxide/metal composites are solid/fluid displacement (oxidation-reduction) reactions of the following type:



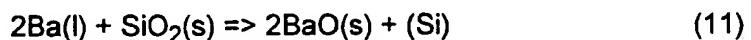
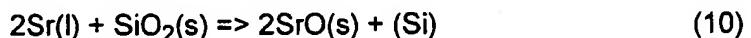
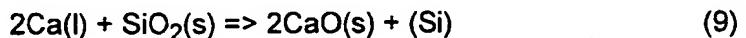
where (Si) refers to silicon present as a pure solid, liquid, or gas or to silicon dissolved in a solid, liquid, or gas solution. For example, prior work has shown that silica ($\text{SiO}_2(\text{s})$) may be converted into $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3/\text{Al-Si}$ composites that retain the shape/dimensions within 1% by the following net reaction:



where (Si) refers to an Al-Si alloy. Exposing silica microtemplates to Al-rich liquid alloys may produce such composites. The silica may be converted into a dense

mixture of Al₂O₃(s) and Al-Si alloy with little ($\leq 1\%$) change in dimensions or shape. That is, although 2 moles of Al₂O₃(s) possess a smaller volume than 3 moles of SiO₂(s), the difference in these volumes is taken up by the liquid Al-Si (and, hence, solid Al-Si upon solidification of this liquid). After such reaction, the excess solidified Al-Si within the transformed silica microtemplate may be removed by selective etching/dissolution to yield an Al₂O₃(s) body that retains the shape and/or surface features of the starting silica microtemplate.

Displacement (oxidation-reduction) reactions of the following type may also be used to convert silica-based microtemplates into other oxides or oxide/metal composites:



For these reactions, the oxide produced has a larger volume than the oxide consumed (e.g., 2 moles of CaO(s) have a larger volume than 1 mole of SiO₂(s)). In these cases, although the overall silica microtemplate shape may be retained upon reaction, some surface features may be controllably altered (e.g., some of the fine pores of the silica microtemplate may be filled in with new ceramic). Alternately, depending on the reaction conditions, the silica microtemplate may expand upon reaction to yield a larger component with the same shape and with surface features of the same size. If the (Si) product of reactions (9)-(11) is present as a solid phase, then such silicon may be removed from the converted microcomponent (e.g., by selective dissolution), so as to yield microcomponents comprised of only oxides.

Pure CaO bodies may be particularly attractive for biomedical applications, given the biocompatibility of CaO in the human body (i.e., CaO may dissolve in blood and be used to enhance natural bone growth).

In addition to forming single component oxides, reactions may be chosen that yield multicomponent oxides. For example,



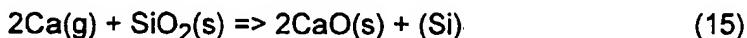
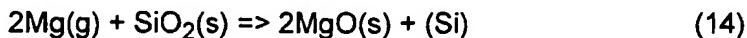
Spinel, MgAl₂O₄, is a relatively high melting, refractory oxide with good resistance to chemical attack by basic or acidic oxide liquids or by reactive gases (e.g., sodium vapor).

Reactions may also be chosen that yield multicomponent metal products, such as silicides:



where X refers to an element capable of undergoing a displacement reaction with SiO₂(s). MoSi₂(s) is a relatively high melting and oxidation-resistant intermetallic compound.

Oxidation-reduction reactions with silica microtemplates may also involve gas-phase reactants, such as shown below:



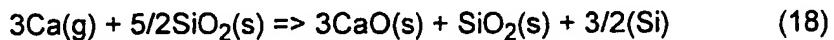
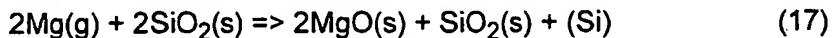
By using such gas/solid reactions to transform SiO₂(s), excess solid metallic reactant (e.g., excess Mg or Ca) adhering to the converted body may be avoided, unlike for the case of liquid/solid oxidation-reduction reactions. For oxidation-reduction reactions involving a liquid metallic reactant, excess solidified metallic reactant

adhering to and surrounding the converted oxide component must be removed upon cooling in order to extract the microcomponent. This removal of excess metal is an additional time-consuming step that may be avoided by using gas/solid oxidation-reduction reactions. Hence, such gas/solid oxidation-reduction reactions have an inherent advantage over liquid/solid oxidation-reduction reactions.

If the (Si) product of reactions (14) and (15) is present as a solid phase (either pure solid silicon or a silicon-bearing solid), then such silicon may be removed from the converted microcomponent (e.g., by selective dissolution), so as to yield microcomponents comprised of only oxides. Alternately, a condensed (Si) product phase may be oxidized by reaction with gaseous oxygen to convert the silicon back into $\text{SiO}_2(\text{s})$. Subsequent oxide-oxide reactions may then be used to produce microcomponents comprised of multioxide compounds. For example, reoxidation of a solid (Si) product in reaction (14) to $\text{SiO}_2(\text{s})$ followed by the following oxide-oxide reaction may yield a microcomponent comprised of forsterite, $\text{Mg}_2\text{SiO}_4(\text{s})$:

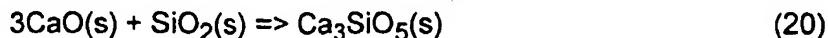
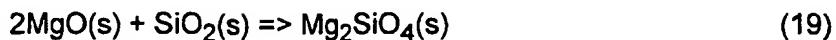


Oxidation-reduction reactions may also be used to partially consume the silica in the microtemplates, so that subsequent oxide-oxide reactions may be used to produce microcomponents comprised of multioxide compounds. Consider, for example, the following reactions:

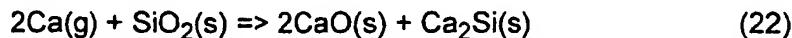
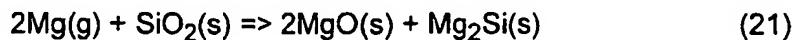


In these reactions, the silica is only partially consumed (i.e., only 1 of 2 moles of silica is reduced by the $\text{Mg}(\text{g})$ or $\text{Ca}(\text{g})$). Further heat treatment of the oxide

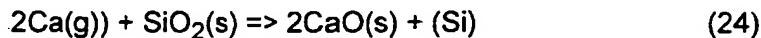
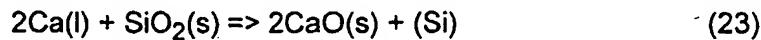
products of reactions (17) and (18) in the absence of gaseous Mg or Ca may result in the formation of the refractory compounds, Mg_2SiO_4 and Ca_3SiO_5 , by the following oxide-oxide reactions:



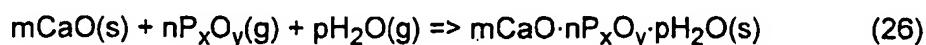
Oxidation-reduction reactions with silica microtemplates may also be used to produce microcomponents comprised of oxide/intermetallic composites, such as shown below:



A series of reactions may also be used to convert silica microtemplates into multicomponent ceramics. For example, silica microtemplates may first be converted into CaO by one of the following oxidation-reduction reactions:

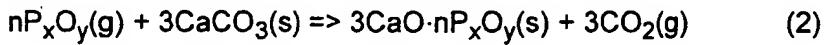


After selective removal of the (Si) product (e.g., by selective dissolution), the resulting, shaped CaO microbodies may then undergo further reaction(s) to produce shaped microbodies comprised of CaO-bearing compounds. For example, the following types of additive reactions may be used to convert the CaO into calcium phosphates:

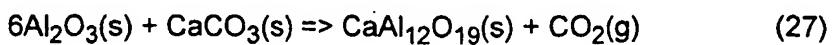


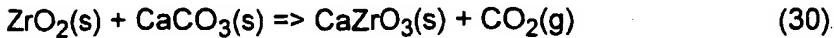
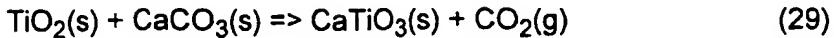
where $P_xO_y(g)$ refers to a gaseous P-O-bearing species, $mCaO \cdot nP_xO_y(s)$ refers to a calcium phosphate compound (e.g., $Ca_2P_2O_7$, $Ca_3P_2O_8$), and $mCaO \cdot nP_xO_y \cdot pH_2O(s)$ refers to hydrated calcium phosphate compounds (e.g., calcium hydroxyapatite, $10CaO \cdot 6P_xO_y \cdot 2H_2O$). Calcium phosphate microcomponents may be particularly attractive for biomedical applications. For example, because calcium hydroxyapatite is the major mineral in human teeth and bones, the body does not reject this compound. Hence calcium hydroxyapatite microcomponents derived from silica microtemplates would be biocompatible. Such biocompatible microcomponents would be particularly attractive for biomedical applications (e.g., bioresorbable microcapsules for targeted drug or radiation delivery).

The chemical compositions of calcium carbonate microtemplates may be changed by additive reactions. Such additive reactions may involve gas-phase reactants, as shown below (and mentioned above):



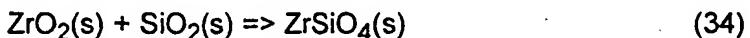
Alternately, condensed phase reactants may be deposited onto the calcium carbonate microtemplate by a vapor phase technique (including, but not limited to, sputtering, laser ablation, evaporation, and chemical vapor deposition) or a liquid phase technique (including, but not limited to, melt infiltration, solution infiltration, slurry infiltration). After deposition of the reactants, the calcium carbonate may then undergo an additive reaction with the reactant. Examples of additive reactions between condensed phase reactants and calcium carbonate include, but are not limited to:





Metallic precursors to oxide reactants may also be deposited onto the calcium carbonate microtemplate by a vapor phase technique or a liquid phase technique, and then oxidized to form an oxide reactant. The oxide reactant may then undergo reaction with the calcium carbonate to form a new compound, solid solution, or mixture. Examples of metallic precursors that may be deposited, oxidized, and then reacted with calcium carbonate include, but are not limited to phosphorus, aluminum, silicon, titanium, and zirconium (i.e., oxidation of these deposited elements may be followed by reactions with calcium carbonate as per reactions (2) and (27)-(30)).

Additive reactions of the type (2) and (27)-(30) may also be used to convert silica microtemplates into silicate compounds. Examples of such additive reactions include, but are not limited to:



Metallic precursors to oxide reactants may also be deposited onto the silica microtemplate by a vapor phase technique or a liquid phase technique, and then oxidized to form an oxide reactant. The oxide reactant may then undergo reaction with the silica to form a new compound, solid solution, or mixture. Examples of metallic precursors that may be deposited, oxidized, and then reacted with silica

include, but are not limited to aluminum, calcium, magnesium, and zirconium (i.e., oxidation of these deposited elements may be followed by reactions with silica as per reactions (31)-(34)).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENT(S)

Embodiment 1-Machining/forming plus chemical conversion of shape to silica then to desired ceramic-bearing microcomponent

Silicon is micromachined by one or a combination of micromachining methods listed above. The silicon micropreform is then used to obtain a patterned silica micropreform. The fabrication of a silica micropreform from a patterned silicon micropreform is conducted by oxidation of the patterned silicon micropreform. The silica micropreform is then used in one or more subsequent chemical reaction(s) or series of reactions to form a ceramic microcomponent that has maintained the shape of the original patterned silicon micropreform while changing the composition of the micropreform.

Embodiment 2-Machining/forming plus coating and chemical conversion of coating to silica then to desired ceramic-bearing component

Silicon is micromachined by one or a combination of micromachined methods listed above to yield a silicon micropreform. The silicon micropreform is then used as a template or mold onto which silica or a silica precursor is deposited by any of the deposition methods listed above. The silica or silica precursor is then reacted to convert them into another oxide or oxide/metal composite while maintaining the shape of the original silicon micropreform.

Embodiment 3-Machining/forming plus conversion of shape to silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compounds then conversion to other carbides, nitrides, silicides and/or to other ceramics and/or to other intermetallic compounds

Silicon is micromachined by one or a combination of the methods listed above to yield a patterned silicon micropreform. The silicon micropreform is then subjected to a gas phase reaction to yield a silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound. The silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compounds are any known silicon based compounds including but not limited to MoSi₂. The gas phase reactions are for example, nitridation of the patterned silicon micropreform, carburization of the patterned silicon micropreform, or reaction of the patterned silicon with a Mo-bearing gas to form MoSi₂. The silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compounds are themselves useful compounds or may be converted to other compounds, ceramic compounds or intermetallic compounds.

Embodiment 4-Machining/forming plus coating of silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compounds and then conversion to other carbides, nitrides, silicides and/or to other ceramics and/or to other intermetallic compounds

Silicon is micromachined by one or a combination of the methods listed above to yield a patterned silicon micropreform. The silicon micropreform is then used as a template or mold onto which a different silicon compound (e.g. SiC, Si₃N₄ or MoSi₂) or a silicon compound precursor may be deposited by any of the deposition methods listed above. A chemical reaction then converts deposited materials into other compounds, ceramic compounds or intermetallic compounds.

Embodiment 5

Like Embodiment 3 except that carbide, nitride or silicide is further converted to a second carbide nitride or silicide, and/or to other second ceramics and/or to other intermetallic compounds.

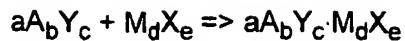
Embodiment 6

Like Embodiment 4 except that carbide, nitride or silicide is further converted to a second carbide, nitride or silicide, and/or to other second ceramics and/or to other intermetallic compounds.

The exemplary embodiments herein disclosed are not intended to be exhaustive or to unnecessarily limit the scope of the invention. The exemplary embodiments were chosen and described in order to explain the principles of the present invention so that others skilled in the art may practice the invention. Having shown and described exemplary embodiments of the present invention, it will be within the ability of one of ordinary skill in the art to make alterations or modifications to the present invention, such as through the substitution of equivalent chemicals or through the use of equivalent process steps, so as to be able to practice the present invention without departing from its spirit as reflected in the appended claims, the text and teaching of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein. It is the intention, therefore, to limit the invention only as indicated by the scope of the claims and equivalents thereof. The claims are hereby incorporated by references into the specification.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**General Method of Making a Ceramic Microarticle**

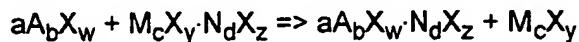
1. A method for the production of a shaped microcomponent comprising the steps of:
 - a) obtaining at least one synthetic microtemplate having an original chemical composition and an original dimensional feature; and
 - b) subjecting said at least one synthetic microtemplate to a chemical reaction, so as to partially or completely convert the said at least one synthetic microtemplate into said shaped microcomponent having a chemical composition different than said original chemical composition and having substantially the same dimensional feature as said original dimensional feature.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said original chemical composition comprises silica.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said chemical reaction is a gas phase displacement reaction.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said microcomponent template defines a space wherein said space is provided with at least one additional non-native substance.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein said at least one additional non-native substance is a pharmaceutically acceptable substance.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein said chemical reaction is an additive reaction of the following type:



where A_bY_c is a reactant, M_dX_e is a constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, and $aA_bY_c \cdot M_dX_e$ is an ionically or covalently bonded solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent; and wherein a, b, c, d, and e are stoichiometric coefficients.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein $aA_bY_c \cdot M_dX_e$ is selected from the group consisting of solid oxide compounds, oxide solid solutions, and solid oxide mixtures.
8. The method of claim 6 wherein $aA_bY_c \cdot M_dX_e$ is selected from the group consisting of silicon oxide-bearing compounds, silicon oxide-bearing solid solutions, and silicon oxide-bearing mixtures.
9. The method of claim 6 wherein said silicon oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of aluminosilicates, alkali silicates, alkaline earth silicates, alkali aluminosilicates, alkaline earth aluminosilicates, borosilicates, cadmium silicates, cobalt silicates, erbium silicates, iron silicates, lead silicates, manganese silicates, neodymium silicates, nickel silicates, yttrium silicates, ytterbium silicates, zinc silicates, zircon, and mixtures thereof.
10. The method of claim 6 wherein $aA_bY_c \cdot M_dX_e$ is selected from the group consisting of calcium oxide-bearing compounds, calcium oxide-bearing solid solutions, and calcium oxide-bearing mixtures.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein said calcium oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of calcium alkali-silicates, calcium aluminates, calcium aluminosilicates, calcium alkali-aluminosilicates, calcium bismuthates, calcium borates, calcium cerates, calcium chromites, calcium cuprates, calcium ferrites, calcium gadolinium oxides, calcium gallates, calcium germanates, calcium hafnate, calcium manganates, calcium molybdates, calcium niobates, calcium phosphates, calcium plumbates, calcium silicates, calcium stannates, calcium sulfates, calcium tantalates, calcium titanates, calcium tungstates, calcium uranium oxides, calcium vanadates, calcium yttrium oxides, calcium zirconates, and mixtures thereof.
12. The method of claim 1, wherein said chemical reaction is a metathetic reaction of the following type:

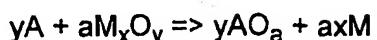


where A_bX_w is a reactant, $M_cX_y \cdot N_dX_z$ is a constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, $aA_bX_w \cdot N_dX_z$ is an ionically or covalently bonded first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent, and M_cX_y is a second reaction product; and wherein a, b, c, d, w, y and z are stoichiometric coefficients.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein $aA_bX_w \cdot N_dX_z$ is selected from the group consisting of oxide compounds, oxide solid solutions, and oxide mixtures.

14. The method of claim 12 wherein $aA_bX_wN_dX_z$ is selected from the group consisting of silicon oxide-bearing compounds, silicon oxide-bearing solid solutions, and silicon oxide-bearing mixtures.
15. The method of claim 14 wherein said silicon oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of aluminosilicates, alkali silicates, alkaline earth silicates, alkali aluminosilicates, alkaline earth aluminosilicates, borosilicates, cadmium silicates, cobalt silicates, erbium silicates, iron silicates, lead silicates, manganese silicates, neodymium silicates, nickel silicates, yttrium silicates, ytterbium silicates, zinc silicates, zircon, and mixtures thereof.
16. The method of claim 12 wherein $aA_bX_wN_dX_z$ is selected from the group consisting of calcium oxide-bearing compounds, calcium oxide-bearing solid solutions, and calcium oxide-bearing mixtures.
17. The method of claim 16 wherein said calcium oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of calcium alkalisilicates, calcium aluminates, calcium aluminosilicates, calcium alkali aluminosilicates, calcium bismuthates, calcium borates, calcium cerates, calcium chromites, calcium cuprates, calcium ferrites, calcium gadolinium oxides, calcium gallates, calcium germanates, calcium hafnate, calcium manganates, calcium molybdates, calcium niobates, calcium phosphates, calcium plumbates, calcium silicates, calcium stannates, calcium sulfates, calcium tantalates, calcium titanates, calcium tungstates, calcium uranium oxides, calcium vanadates, calcium yttrium oxides, calcium zirconates, and mixtures thereof.

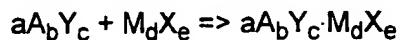
18. The method of claim 1, wherein said chemical reaction is an oxidation-reduction reaction of the following type:



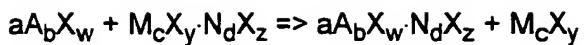
where A is an elemental reactant, M_xO_y is an oxide constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, AO_a is an oxide first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent, and M is a second reaction product; and wherein a, x and y are stoichiometric coefficients.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein AO_a , is selected from the group consisting of solid oxide compounds, oxide solid solutions, and solid oxide mixtures.
20. The method of claim 18 wherein AO_a , is selected from the group consisting of silicon oxide-bearing compounds, silicon oxide-bearing solid solutions, and silicon oxide-bearing mixtures.
21. The method of claim 20 wherein said silicon oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of aluminosilicates, alkali silicates, alkaline earth silicates, alkali aluminosilicates, alkaline earth aluminosilicates, borosilicates, cadmium silicates, cobalt silicates, erbium silicates, iron silicates, lead silicates, manganese silicates, neodymium silicates, nickel silicates, yttrium silicates, ytterbium silicates, zinc silicates, zircon, and mixtures thereof.
22. The method of claim 18 wherein AO_a , is selected from the group consisting of calcium oxide-bearing compounds, calcium oxide-bearing solid solutions, and calcium oxide-bearing mixtures.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein said calcium oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of calcium alkali-silicates, calcium aluminates, calcium aluminosilicates, calcium alkali-aluminosilicates, calcium bismuthates, calcium borates, calcium cerates, calcium chromites, calcium cuprates, calcium ferrites, calcium gadolinium oxides, calcium gallates, calcium germanates, calcium hafnate, calcium manganates, calcium molybdates, calcium niobates, calcium phosphates, calcium plumbates, calcium silicates, calcium stannates, calcium sulfates, calcium tantalates, calcium titanates, calcium tungstates, calcium uranium oxides, calcium vanadates, calcium yttrium oxides, calcium zirconates, and mixtures thereof.
24. The method of claim 18 wherein M_i is selected from the group consisting of a solid metal, a solid metal alloy, a solid intermetallic compound, a solid metallic mixture, a solid intermetallic mixture, and mixtures thereof.
25. The method of claim 1, wherein said chemical reaction involves at least two reactions selected from the group consisting of an additive reaction of the following type:



where A_bY_c is a reactant, M_dX_e is a constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, and aA_bY_c · M_dX_e is an ionically or covalently bonded solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent; and wherein a, b, c, d, and e are stoichiometric coefficients; a metathetic reaction of the following type:



where A_bX_w is a reactant, $M_cX_y \cdot N_dX_z$ is a constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, $aA_bX_w \cdot N_dX_z$ is a first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent, and M_cX_y is a second reaction product; and wherein a, b, c, d, w, y and z are stoichiometric coefficients; and an oxidation-reduction reaction of the following type:



where A is an elemental reactant, M_xO_y is an oxide constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, AO_a is an oxide first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent, and M is a second reaction product; and wherein a, x and y are stoichiometric coefficients; and combinations thereof.

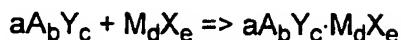
26. The method of claim 1, wherein said shaped microcomponent defines a space wherein said space is provided with at least one additional non-native substance.
27. The method of claim 26, wherein said at least one additional non-native substance is a pharmaceutically active substance.
28. The method of claim 1 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses a shape selected from the group consisting of a solid microcylinder, a microtube, a solid microbar, a hollow microbar, a solid microsphere, a hollow microsphere, a microwheel, a microgear, a microrotor, a microplate, a microdisk, a microtetrahedron, a microwedge, a microtetrakaidecahedron, a

microspring, a microspiral, a microlever, a microcantilever, a solid microcone, a microfunnel, a microhoneycomb, and a micromesh.

29. The method of claim 1 wherein said shaped microcomponent is used in a device selected from the group consisting of a micropump, a microvalve, a microfunnel, a micronozzle, a microreactor, a microbearing, a micropulley, a microturbine engine, a micropiston engine, a micromotor, a microactuator, a microswitch, a microtransducer, a microhinge, a microrelay, a microdie, a microsensor, a microcatalyst, a microsyringe, a microneedle, a microcapsule, a microsieve, a microfilter, a micromembrane, a microseparator, a micromirror, a microlens, a microprism, a microdiffraction grating, and a microrefraction grating.
30. The method of claim 1 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 1 millimeter in size.
31. The method of claim 1 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 100 microns in size.
32. The method of claim 1 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 25 microns in size.
33. The method of claim 1 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 10 microns in size.
34. The method of claim 1 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 1 micron in size.
35. The method of claim 1 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 100 nanometers in size.

36. The method of claim 1 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 25 nanometers in size.
37. The method of claim 1 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 10 nanometers in size.
38. A microcomponent made in accordance with the method of claim 1.
39. A shaped microcomponent made in accordance with claim 4.
General Method Using More than One Chemical Reaction
40. A method for the production of a shaped microcomponent comprising the steps of:
 - a) obtaining at least one synthetic microtemplate having an original chemical composition, and an original dimensional feature; and
 - b) subjecting said at least one synthetic microtemplate to a first chemical reaction, so as to partially or completely convert said at least one synthetic microtemplate into an intermediate microcomponent having a second chemical composition different than said original chemical composition; and then
 - c) subjecting said intermediate microcomponent to a second chemical reaction so as to partially or completely convert the said intermediate microcomponent into said shaped microcomponent having a chemical composition different than said original chemical composition and different than said second chemical composition and having substantially the same dimensional feature as said original dimensional feature.
41. The method of claim 40, wherein said original chemical composition is selected from the group consisting of silicon and silica.

42. The method of claim 40 wherein said first chemical reaction is an additive reaction of the following type:



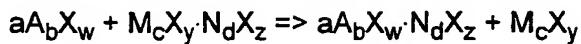
where A_bY_c is a reactant, M_dX_e is a constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, and $aA_bY_cM_dX_e$ is an ionically or covalently bonded solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said intermediate microcomponent; and wherein a, b, c, d, and e are stoichiometric coefficients.

43. The method of claim 42 wherein $aA_bY_cM_dX_e$ is selected from the group consisting of solid oxide compounds, oxide solid solutions, and solid oxide mixtures.

44. The method of claim 42 wherein $aA_bY_cM_dX_e$ is selected from the group consisting of silicon oxide-bearing compounds, silicon oxide-bearing solid solutions, and silicon oxide-bearing mixtures.

45. The method of claim 44 wherein said silicon oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of aluminosilicates, alkali silicates, alkaline earth silicates, alkali aluminosilicates, alkaline earth aluminosilicates, borosilicates, cadmium silicates, cobalt silicates, erbium silicates, iron silicates, lead silicates, manganese silicates, neodymium silicates, nickel silicates, yttrium silicates, ytterbium silicates, zinc silicates, zircon, and mixtures thereof.

46. The method of claim 44 wherein $aA_bY_cM_dX_e$ is selected from the group consisting of calcium oxide-bearing compounds, calcium oxide-bearing solid solutions, and calcium oxide-bearing mixtures.
47. The method of claim 46 wherein said calcium oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of calcium alkali-silicates, calcium aluminates, calcium aluminosilicates, calcium alkali-aluminosilicates, calcium bismuthates, calcium borates, calcium cerates, calcium chromites, calcium cuprates, calcium ferrites, calcium gadolinium oxides, calcium gallates, calcium germanates, calcium hafnate, calcium manganates, calcium molybdates, calcium niobates, calcium phosphates, calcium plumbates, calcium silicates, calcium stannates, calcium sulfates, calcium tantalates, calcium titanates, calcium tungstates, calcium uranium oxides, calcium vanadates, calcium yttrium oxides, calcium zirconates, and mixtures thereof.
48. The method of claim 40 wherein said first chemical reaction is a metathetic reaction of the following type:

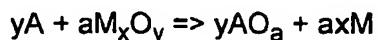


where A_bX_w is a reactant, $M_cX_y \cdot N_dX_z$ is a constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, $aA_bX_w \cdot N_dX_z$ is an ionically or covalently bonded first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said intermediate microcomponent, and M_cX_y is a second reaction product; and wherein a, b, c, d, w, y and z are stoichiometric coefficients.

49. The method of claim 48 wherein $aA_bX_wN_dX_z$, is selected from the group consisting of oxide compounds, oxide solid solutions, and oxide mixtures.
50. The method of claim 48 wherein $aA_bX_wN_dX_z$, is selected from the group consisting of silicon oxide-bearing compounds, silicon oxide-bearing solid solutions, and silicon oxide-bearing mixtures.
51. The method of claim 50 wherein said silicon oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of aluminosilicates, alkali silicates, alkaline earth silicates, alkali aluminosilicates, alkaline earth aluminosilicates, borosilicates, cadmium silicates, cobalt silicates, erbium silicates, iron silicates, lead silicates, manganese silicates, neodymium silicates, nickel silicates, yttrium silicates, ytterbium silicates, zinc silicates, zircon, and mixtures thereof.
52. The method of claim 48 wherein $aA_bX_wN_dX_z$, is selected from the group consisting of calcium oxide-bearing compounds, calcium oxide-bearing solid solutions, and calcium oxide-bearing mixtures.
53. The method of claim 52 wherein said calcium oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of calcium alkalisilicates, calcium aluminates, calcium aluminosilicates, calcium alkali aluminosilicates, calcium bismuthates, calcium borates, calcium cerates, calcium chromites, calcium cuprates, calcium ferrites, calcium gadolinium oxides, calcium gallates, calcium germanates, calcium hafnate, calcium manganates, calcium molybdates, calcium niobates, calcium phosphates, calcium plumbates, calcium silicates, calcium stannates, calcium sulfates, calcium tantalates,

calcium titanates, calcium tungstates, calcium uranium oxides, calcium vanadates, calcium yttrium oxides, calcium zirconates, and mixtures thereof.

54. The method of claim 40 wherein said first chemical reaction is an oxidation-reduction reaction of the following type:



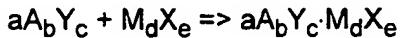
where A is an elemental reactant, M_xO_y is an oxide constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, AO_a is an oxide first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said intermediate microcomponent, and M is a second reaction product; and wherein a, x, and y are stoichiometric coefficients.

55. The method of claim 54 wherein AO_a , is selected from the group consisting of solid oxide compounds, oxide solid solutions, and solid oxide mixtures.

56. The method of claim 54 wherein AO_a , is selected from the group consisting of silicon oxide-bearing compounds, silicon oxide-bearing solid solutions, and silicon oxide-bearing mixtures.

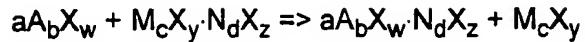
57. The method of claim 56 wherein said silicon oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of aluminosilicates, alkali silicates, alkaline earth silicates, alkali aluminosilicates, alkaline earth aluminosilicates, borosilicates, cadmium silicates, cobalt silicates, erbium silicates, iron silicates, lead silicates, manganese silicates, neodymium silicates, nickel silicates, yttrium silicates, ytterbium silicates, zinc silicates, zircon, and mixtures thereof.

58. The method of claim 54 wherein AO_a is selected from the group consisting of calcium oxide-bearing compounds, calcium oxide-bearing solid solutions, and calcium oxide-bearing mixtures.
59. The method of claim 58 wherein said calcium oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of calcium alkalisilicates, calcium aluminates, calcium aluminosilicates, calcium alkali-aluminosilicates, calcium bismuthates, calcium borates, calcium cerates, calcium chromites, calcium cuprates, calcium ferrites, calcium gadolinium oxides, calcium gallates, calcium germanates, calcium hafnate, calcium manganates, calcium molybdates, calcium niobates, calcium phosphates, calcium plumbates, calcium silicates, calcium stannates, calcium sulfates, calcium tantalates, calcium titanates, calcium tungstates, calcium uranium oxides, calcium vanadates, calcium yttrium oxides, calcium zirconates, and mixtures thereof.
60. The method of claim 54 wherein said second reaction product, M, is selected from the group consisting of a solid metal, a solid metal alloy, a solid intermetallic compound, a solid metallic mixture, a solid intermetallic mixture, and mixtures thereof.
61. The method of claim 40, wherein said chemical reaction is selected from the group consisting of an additive reaction of the following type:

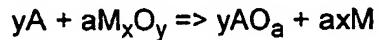


where A_bY_c is a reactant, M_dX_e is a constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, and $aA_bY_cM_dX_e$ is an ionically or covalently bonded solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent; and wherein a, b,

c, d, and e are stoichiometric coefficients; a metathetic reaction of the following type:

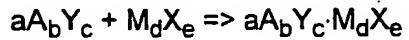


where A_bX_w is a reactant, $M_cX_yN_dX_z$ is a constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, $aA_bX_wN_dX_z$ is an ionically or covalently bonded first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said intermediate microcomponent, and M_cX_y is a second reaction product; and wherein a, b, c, d, w, y, and z are stoichiometric coefficients; and an oxidation-reduction reaction of the following type:



where A is a reactant, M_xO_y is an oxide constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, AO_a is an oxide first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said intermediate microcomponent, and M is a second reaction product; and wherein a, x and y are stoichiometric coefficients; and combinations thereof.

62. The method of claim 40 wherein said second chemical reaction is an additive reaction of the following type:



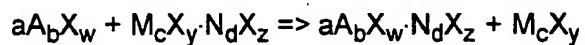
where A_bY_c is a reactant, M_dX_e is a constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, and $aA_bY_cM_dX_e$ is an ionically or covalently bonded solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid

mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent; and wherein a, b, c, d, and e are stoichiometric coefficients.

63. The method of claim 62 wherein $aA_bY_cM_dX_e$ is selected from the group consisting of solid oxide compounds, oxide solid solutions, and solid oxide mixtures.
64. The method of claim 62 wherein $aA_bY_cM_dX_e$ is selected from the group consisting of silicon oxide-bearing compounds, silicon oxide-bearing solid solutions, and silicon oxide-bearing mixtures.
65. The method of claim 64 wherein said silicon oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of aluminosilicates, alkali silicates, alkaline earth silicates, alkali aluminosilicates, alkaline earth aluminosilicates, borosilicates, cadmium silicates, cobalt silicates, erbium silicates, iron silicates, lead silicates, manganese silicates, neodymium silicates, nickel silicates, yttrium silicates, ytterbium silicates, zinc silicates, zircon, and mixtures thereof.
66. The method of claim 62 wherein $aA_bY_cM_dX_e$ is selected from the group consisting of calcium oxide-bearing compounds, calcium oxide-bearing solid solutions, and calcium oxide-bearing mixtures.
67. The method of claim 66 wherein said calcium oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of calcium alkali-silicates, calcium aluminates, calcium aluminosilicates, calcium alkali-aluminosilicates, calcium bismuthates, calcium borates, calcium cerates, calcium chromites, calcium cuprates, calcium ferrites, calcium gadolinium oxides, calcium gallates, calcium germanates, calcium hafnate, calcium manganates, calcium

molybdates, calcium niobates, calcium phosphates, calcium plumbates, calcium silicates, calcium stannates, calcium sulfates, calcium tantalates, calcium titanates, calcium tungstates, calcium uranium oxides, calcium vanadates, calcium yttrium oxides, calcium zirconates, and mixtures thereof.

68. The method of claim 40 wherein said second chemical reaction is a metathetic reaction of the following type:

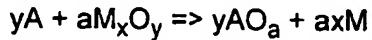


where A_bX_w is a reactant, $M_cX_y \cdot N_dX_z$ is a constituent of the said intermediate microcomponent, $aA_bX_w \cdot N_dX_z$ is an ionically or covalently bonded first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent, and M_cX_y is a second reaction product; and wherein a, b, c, d, w, y, and z are stoichiometric coefficients.

69. The method of claim 68 wherein $aA_bX_w \cdot N_dX_z$, is selected from the group consisting of oxide compounds, oxide solid solutions, and oxide mixtures.
70. The method of claim 68 wherein $aA_bX_w \cdot N_dX_z$, is selected from the group consisting of silicon oxide-bearing compounds, silicon oxide-bearing solid solutions, and silicon oxide-bearing mixtures.
71. The method of claim 70 wherein said silicon oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of aluminosilicates, alkali silicates, alkaline earth silicates, alkali aluminosilicates, alkaline earth aluminosilicates, borosilicates, cadmium silicates, cobalt silicates, erbium silicates, iron silicates, lead silicates, manganese silicates, neodymium silicates, nickel

silicates, yttrium silicates, ytterbium silicates, zinc silicates, zircon, and mixtures thereof.

72. The method of claim 68 wherein $aA_bX_wN_dX_z$, is selected from the group consisting of calcium oxide-bearing compounds, calcium oxide-bearing solid solutions, and calcium oxide-bearing mixtures.
73. The method of claim 72 wherein said calcium oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of calcium alkalisilicates, calcium aluminates, calcium aluminosilicates, calcium alkali aluminosilicates, calcium bismuthates, calcium borates, calcium cerates, calcium chromites, calcium cuprates, calcium ferrites, calcium gadolinium oxides, calcium gallates, calcium germanates, calcium hafnate, calcium manganates, calcium molybdates, calcium niobates, calcium phosphates, calcium plumbates, calcium silicates, calcium stannates, calcium sulfates, calcium tantalates, calcium titanates, calcium tungstates, calcium uranium oxides, calcium vanadates, calcium yttrium oxides, calcium zirconates, and mixtures thereof.
74. The method of claim 40 wherein said second chemical reaction is an oxidation-reduction reaction of the following type:

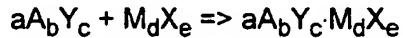


where A is a reactant, M_xO_y is a constituent of the said intermediate microcomponent, AO_a is an oxide first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent, and M is a second reaction product.

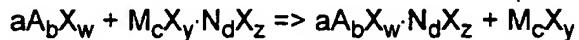
75. The method of claim 74 wherein AO_a, is selected from the group consisting of solid oxide compounds, oxide solid solutions, and solid oxide mixtures; and wherein a, x, and y are stoichiometric coefficients.
76. The method of claim 74 wherein AO_a, is selected from the group consisting of silicon oxide-bearing compounds, silicon oxide-bearing solid solutions, and silicon oxide-bearing mixtures.
77. The method of claim 76 wherein said silicon oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of aluminosilicates, alkali silicates, alkaline earth silicates, alkali aluminosilicates, alkaline earth aluminosilicates, borosilicates, cadmium silicates, cobalt silicates, erbium silicates, iron silicates, lead silicates, manganese silicates, neodymium silicates, nickel silicates, yttrium silicates, ytterbium silicates, zinc silicates, zircon, and mixtures thereof.
78. The method of claim 74 wherein AO_a, is selected from the group consisting of calcium oxide-bearing compounds, calcium oxide-bearing solid solutions, and calcium oxide-bearing mixtures.
79. The method of claim 78 wherein said calcium oxide-bearing compound is selected from the group consisting of calcium alkalisilicates, calcium aluminates, calcium aluminosilicates, calcium alkali aluminosilicates, calcium bismuthates, calcium borates, calcium cerates, calcium chromites, calcium cuprates, calcium ferrites, calcium gadolinium oxides, calcium gallates, calcium germanates, calcium hafnate, calcium manganates, calcium molybdates, calcium niobates, calcium phosphates, calcium plumbates, calcium silicates, calcium stannates, calcium sulfates, calcium tantalates,

calcium titanates, calcium tungstates, calcium uranium oxides, calcium vanadates, calcium yttrium oxides, calcium zirconates, and mixtures thereof.

80. The method of claim 74 wherein said second reaction product, M, is selected from the group consisting of a solid metal, a solid metal alloy, a solid intermetallic compound, a solid metallic mixture, a solid intermetallic mixture, and mixtures thereof.
81. The method of claim 40, wherein said chemical reaction is selected from the group consisting of an additive reaction of the following type:



where A_bY_c is a reactant, M_dX_e is a constituent of the said at least one synthetic microtemplate, and $aA_bY_cM_dX_e$ is an ionically or covalently bonded solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent; and wherein a, b, c, d, and e are stoichiometric coefficients; a metathetic reaction of the following type:



where A_bX_w is a reactant, $M_cX_yN_dX_z$ is a constituent of the said intermediate microcomponent, $aA_bX_wN_dX_z$ is an ionically or covalently bonded first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent, and M_cX_y is a second reaction product; wherein a, b, c, d, w, y, and z are stoichiometric coefficients; and an oxidation-reduction reaction of the following type:



where A is a reactant, M_xO_y is an oxide constituent of the said intermediate microcomponent, AO_a is an oxide first solid reaction product that is a solid compound, a solid solution, or a solid mixture that is retained in the said shaped microcomponent, and M is a second reaction product; and wherein a, x, and y are stoichiometric coefficients; and combinations thereof.

82. The method of claim 40, wherein said shaped microcomponent defines a space wherein said space is provided with at least one additional non-native substance.
83. The method of claim 82, wherein said at least one additional non-native substance is a pharmaceutically active substance.
84. The method of claim 40 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses a shape selected from the group consisting of a solid microcylinder, a microtube, a solid microbar, a hollow microbar, a solid microsphere, a hollow microsphere, a microwheel, a microgear, a microrotor, a microplate, a microdisk, a microtetrahedron, a microwedge, a microtetraakaidecahedron, a microspring, a microspiral, a microlever, a microcantilever, a solid microcone, a microfunnel, a microhoneycomb, and a micromesh.
85. The method of claim 40 wherein said shaped microcomponent is used in a device selected from the group consisting of a micropump, a microvalve, a microfunnel, a micronozzle, a microreactor, a microbearing, a micropulley, a microturbine engine, a micropiston engine, a micromotor, a microactuator, a microswitch, a microtransducer, a microhinge, a microrelay, a microdie, a microsensor, a microcatalyst, a microsyringe, a microneedle, a microcapsule, a microsieve, a microfilter, a micromembrane, a microseparator, a

micromirror, a microlens, a microprism, a microdiffraction grating, and a microrefraction grating.

86. The method of claim 40 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 1 millimeter in size.
87. The method of claim 40 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 100 microns in size.
88. The method of claim 40 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 25 microns in size.
89. The method of claim 40 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 10 microns in size.
90. The method of claim 40 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 1 micron in size.
91. The method of claim 40 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 100 nanometers in size.
92. The method of claim 40 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 25 nanometers in size.
93. The method of claim 40 wherein said shaped microcomponent possesses at least one dimensional feature that is less than 10 nanometers in size.
94. A shaped microcomponent made in accordance with the method of claim 40.
95. A shaped microcomponent derived in accordance with the method of claim 40 from an article having an original chemical composition and an original dimensional feature, said original chemical composition having been converted to an altered composition while retaining said original dimensional feature.

Method of Microforming a Microarticle of Silicon followed by Chemical Conversion to Ceramic

96. A method of producing a ceramic microarticle, said method comprising:
 - (a) obtaining a silicon microarticle having a target shape;
 - (b) subjecting said microarticle to a process so as to converting at least some of said silicon to silica;
 - (c) subjecting said silica to a process so as to convert at least some of said silica to a ceramic-bearing microarticle having a chemical composition different than said silicon microarticle and different than silica while substantially maintaining said target shape.
97. A method according to claim 96 wherein said silicon microarticle is prepared from a method selected from the group consisting of photolithography, dry physical etching, ion etching/sputtering, laser ablation, dry chemical etching, combined dry physical and chemical etching, wet chemical etching and LIGA.

Method of Microforming a Microarticle of Silicon followed by Coating with Silica followed by Chemical Conversion to Ceramic-Bearing Microarticle

98. A method of producing a ceramic microarticle, said method comprising:
 - (a) obtaining a silicon microarticle having a target shape;
 - (b) providing a silica-bearing coating on said microarticle, said coating comprising silica; and

(c) subjecting said silica to a process so as to convert at least some of said silica to ceramic-bearing micorarticle while substantially maintaining said target shape.

99. A method according to claim 98 wherein said silicon microarticle is prepared from a method selected from the group consisting of photolithography, dry physical etching, ion etching/sputtering, laser ablation, dry chemical etching, combined dry physical and chemical etching, wet chemical etching and LIGA.

100. A method according to claim 98, wherein said silicon microarticle is provided with a coating with a method selected from the group consisting of physical or chemical vapor deposition, spin coating of a silica slurry or silica precursor solution, screen printing of silica slurry or silica precursor solution, pressing of hot viscous glass onto the silicon microarticle, and casting of molten glass onto the silicon microarticle.

101. A method according to claim 40 wherein said first reaction includes the oxidation of silicon.

Method of Microforming a Microarticle of Silicon followed by Chemical Conversion to Silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound

102. A method of producing a ceramic microarticle, said method comprising:

- obtaining a silicon microarticle having a target shape;
- subjecting said microarticle to a process so as to converting at least some of said silicon to silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound.

103. A method according to claim 102 wherein said silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound is selected from the group consisting of carbides, nitrides, borides and MoSi₂ compounds.
104. A method according to claim 102 wherein said silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound is selected from the group consisting of intermetallic compounds.
105. A method according to claim 102 further comprising (c) subjecting said silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound to a process so as to convert at least some of said silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound to a ceramic.
106. A method according to claim 102 further comprising (c) subjecting said silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound to a process so as to convert at least some of said silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound to an intermetallic compound.
107. A method according to claim 102 wherein said silicon microarticle is prepared from a method selected from the group consisting of photolithography, dry physical etching, ion etching/sputtering, laser ablation, dry chemical etching, combined dry physical and chemical etching, wet chemical etching and LIGA.

Method of Microforming a Microarticle of Silicon followed by Coating with Silica followed by Chemical Conversion to Ceramic

108. A method of producing a ceramic microarticle, said method comprising:
 - (a) obtaining a silicon microarticle having a target shape;
 - (b) providing a coating on said microarticle, said coating comprising a silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound; and

(c) subjecting said silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound to a process so as to converting at least some of said silicon-bearing ceramic precursor compound to a material selected from the group consisting of ceramic and intermetallic compounds while substantially maintaining said target shape.

109. A method according to claim 108 wherein said silicon ceramic precursor compound is selected from the group consisting of carbides, nitrides, borides and MoSi₂ compounds.

110. A method according to claim 108 wherein said silicon microarticle is prepared from a method selected from the group consisting of photolithography, dry physical etching, ion etching/sputtering, laser ablation, dry chemical etching, combined dry physical and chemical etching, wet chemical etching and LIGA.

111. A method according to claim 108, wherein said microarticle is provided with a coating with a method selected from the group consisting of physical or chemical vapor deposition, spin coating of a silica slurry or silica precursor solution, screen printing of silica slurry or silica precursor solution, pressing of hot viscous glass onto the silicon microarticle, and casting of molten glass onto the silicon microarticle.

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